Negotiation on Labour Standard and Environment in W.T.O

1832. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan to negotiate on labour standard and environment and multilateral agreement in the next meeting of WTO;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) The linkage between trade and labour standards was proposed by some developed countries in the First Ministerial Conference of the WTO at Singapore in 1996 as well as in the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO at Seattle in 1999. India, in coordination with other like-minded countries, had effectively opposed the inclusion of this linkage in both the Conferences. The linkage between trade and environment has been under discussion in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) since 1995 as mandated by the Marrakesh Decision on Trade and Environment. India, in coordination with other like-minded countries has effectively opposed any modifications in the existing WTO Rules as have been proposed by some developed countries. Regarding other multilateral agreements, Government's response would depend on whether it would be in the national interest to engage in any such negotiations.

Damage done by Cyclone to Cashew Plantation in Orissa

1833. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any assessment on the damage done to cashew plantation in Orissa by cyclone last year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the total amount needed for the restoration of cashew plantation in the State of Orissa;

(d) the allocation made by Government for the restoration and development of cashew plantation in that State, so far, after the cyclone; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) As per information available from Government of Orissa, cashew plantations in 188 patches covering 0.135 lakh hectares have been damaged in the cyclone affected areas.

(c) An amount of Rs. 28.00 crores is stated to be required for replantation in the damaged area.

(d) and (e) Central Government have released the following amounts to the State Government in the wake of cyclone for undertaking relief operations including restoration and development of cashew plantation in the State:

(i) Rs. 42.50 crores from Central Share of Calamity Relief Fund (CRF).

(ii) Ad-hoc assistance of Rs. 500 crores from the National Fund for Calamity Relief.

(iii) Advance Release of Rs. 450 crores as plan assistance.

Transfer of Farm and Essential Items Under OGL

1834. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that basic farm and essential items are being transferred to the free list of imports;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) by when they will be brought under OGL;

(d) what will be the impact on the local market; and

(e) what steps are being taken to protect to local manufacturers and farmers in the country from free imports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (e) In view of India's International Commitments, import restrictions on all the items being maintained on account of balance of payment reasons are to be removed latest by 31.03.2001. Some of the items in this category include Agricultural products also. The list of all the 1429 tariff lines on which restrictions are likely to be removed by 31.03.2001 is available in the Parliament Library.

All such imports will be subject to applicable rates of customs duty and provisions of all national laws for the time being in force. This should provide adequate protection to the local manufacturers and farmers. The future impact